

DISCOURSE

ON THE

RECAPTURE OF FUGITIVE SLAVES,

DELIVERED AT STONEHAM, MASS.,

Nov. 3, 1850.

BY

WILLIAM C. WHITCOMB,

PASTOR OF THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH.

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST.

BOSTON:

PRINTED BY CHARLES C. P. MOODY,

Old Dickinson Office, 52 Washington Street,

1850.

INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

WERE it not for the earnest solicitations of a large number of the church and congregation, whose servant I am, and the immense importance of the subject at the present crisis, the following discourse would never appear in print. As circumstances are, however, the author, though aware of its many imperfections, does not feel at liberty to withhold it from the press and the world. If it shall inspire in the breast of a single individual more of sympathy for the colored race, and a better appreciation of the natural rights of all; if it shall more thoroughly indoctrinate any into a belief of the superiority of laws divine to laws human,—or tend in the least degree to hasten the repeal of the Fugitive Slave Bill, its publication will not be in vain.

Having for years endeavored to “remember those in bonds, as bound with them,” and put my soul in their souls’ stead, I can truly say, that nothing in the shape of trials has ever worn so deep a channel of sorrow in my heart, as the enactment of a law which places a large class of God’s creatures—kindred to us by blood of man and by the blood of the Redeemer—outside the pale of governmental protection. Such a fact is enough

“To stir a fever in the pulse of age,
And make an infant’s sinews strong as steel.”

No apology is therefore necessary for the strong language made use of in the Sermon. I should blush for shame, had I spoken any less warmly. Now, if ever, it is “impious to be calm.” Men in earnest, especially those of us resident in the vicinity of Boston, at the present time, have no leisure hours to waste away in patching together fig-leaves wherewith to cover up naked realities; no time to spend in “wrapping silk around the point of truth,” lest it wound a certain portion of the community. Nor will it do to stand uncommitted, “dodging between daylight and dark,” when vital interests are at stake.

“Must we cringe, and temporize, and dumbly stand at rest,
When a burning flood of words is red-hot in the breast?”

God forbid! Shall we fold our arms with stoical indifference, and talk smoothly, using soft and honeyed words, when liberty, and happiness, and even life itself, are being trifled with, and every moment jeopardized by those who “neither fear God nor regard man?” No, no, NO!

“If we have hinted truth, let us whisper no longer,
But speak, as the tempest doth, sterner and stronger.”

The Sermon will be recognized, by those who heard it, as substantially the same which was preached. There is, now and then, a slight change in phraseology, the omission of some extemporaneous remarks which cannot be recalled, and the addition of a few passages omitted during the delivery.

Numerous quotations, from the sayings of others, are introduced in course of the Sermon, for the purpose of showing how generally, among good men, is the feeling of opposition to the principles involved in the Fugitive Slave Bill, and how grievously our law-makers have offended against the moral sense of the nation.

In concluding this preface, the writer would unite with all the friends of universal freedom, in the fervent prayer that the God of the oppressed may defeat the counsels of the wicked, educe good from evil, and speed on the day of the slave’s jubilee, when “liberty shall be proclaimed throughout all the land, unto all the inhabitants thereof.”

W. C. W.

DISCOURSE.

DURING the year of our Lord eighteen hundred and twenty, a great speech was made by a great statesman, at the two hundredth anniversary of the landing of our Puritan forefathers at Plymouth. Every word of that speech has been said to weigh not less than a pound, evincing a mighty intellect and a generous soul. While yet a mere boy, I committed a portion of it to memory, for an academy declamation; and well do I remember how its large ideas and stirring thoughts made my young heart to beat with unwonted emotions of love for freedom, and hatred of oppression; constraining me to determine, that if ever allowed to speak in public, I would reiterate, to the best of my feeble abilities, those truthful sentiments emanating from Daniel Webster.

Shall I repeat to you a short extract from that famous oration? an oration originally delivered on the 22d of December, thirty years ago, by one of the most distinguished men of the present age, who is universally acknowledged to possess transcendent powers of mind; a man whom this nation of ours has delighted to honor, elevating him to the high offices of Representative, Senator, and Secretary of State.

“I deem it my duty,” he says, “on this occasion to suggest, that the land is not yet wholly free from the contamination of a traffic at which every feeling of humanity must forever revolt — I mean the African Slave Trade. Neither public sentiment, nor the law, has hitherto been able entirely to put an end to this odious and abominable trade. If there be within the extent of our knowledge or influence, any participation in this traffic, let us pledge ourselves here, upon the rock of Plymouth, to extirpate and destroy it. It is not fit that the land of

the Pilgrims should bear the shame longer. I hear the sound of the hammer; I see the smoke of the furnaces where manacles and fetters are still forged for human limbs. I see the visages of those, who, by stealth, and at midnight, labor in this work of hell, foul and dark, as may become the artificers of such instruments of misery and torture. Let that spot be purified, or let it cease to be of New England. Let it be purified, or let it be set aside from the Christian world." (*And now comes a sentence or two, whose solemn words, all big with meaning, have been burned indelibly into my very soul, and will not let me rest.*) "I INVOKE THE MINISTERS OF OUR RELIGION," he continues, "THAT THEY PROCLAIM ITS DENUNCIATIONS OF THESE CRIMES. IF THE PULPIT BE SILENT, WHENEVER, OR WHEREVER THERE MAY BE A SINNER BLOODY WITH THIS GUILT, WITHIN THE HEARING OF ITS VOICE, THE PULPIT IS FALSE TO ITS TRUST."

Thus far the extract. Whose heart does not respond Amen to the whole of it? Who does not feel to exclaim, Woe be to the minister that shrinks to utter a faithful testimony against such an *accursed trade* in the bodies and souls of our fellow-men! Well, the African Slave Trade, which consisted in stealing negroes from their native land, and smuggling them into bondage, has been nearly, if not entirely, suppressed; and none can now be found, either north or south, east or west, with the hardihood to defend so infernal a traffic.

But, dear friends, will you believe me when I tell you, that a law in favor of SLAVE-CATCHING — of hunting and recapturing those in the Northern States who have been so fortunate as to break loose from their southern imprisonment and assert the rights of manhood — a law to re-enslave those whom the Providences of God and various human instrumentalities have helped to escape from cruel bondage, has been enacted by the Congress of these United States, in eighteen hundred and fifty, just as the clock of Time is about to strike the Noon of the Nineteenth Century! Yes, yes, "be astonished, O ye heavens," and blush for shame my countrymen; a

system of slave-hunting has been sanctioned by our national government as much *worse* than the African Slave Trade, against which Webster formerly hurled the thunderbolts of his eloquence, as the *debasement of Africa* is worse than the *civilization of Massachusetts*. For it requires no very keen penetration and discernment to perceive, that if it be wrong to seize violently and kidnap those inhabiting a degraded quarter of the globe, where none of the blessings of Christianity are enjoyed, but all is darkness, ignorance, pollution, heathenism, and moral death; I say if it be wicked to transport immortal beings from thence through the horrors of the "middle passage" into the slave states of this Union, how much *more* wicked must it be to take them away from *New England's* blessed light, and New England's glorious privileges into the prison-house of involuntary servitude.

Now let the ministers of our holy religion be invoked to utter their righteous denunciations of such crimes, such *monstrous* crimes against God and man.

"Shall tongues be mute when deeds are wrought
That well might shame extremest hell?
Shall freemen lock the indignant thought?
Shall mercy's bosom cease to swell?
Shall honor bleed? Shall truth succumb?
Shall PULPIT, press, and soul be dumb?"

Now — and would to God that my feeble voice could be heard by every preacher of the gospel throughout the land — now, whenever, and wherever *the pulpit is dumb* on this point, or the trumpet, blown by the watchman on the walls of Zion, gives "an uncertain sound," *that pulpit is false* and recreant to its trust.

"When our country to ruin's brink is verging,
In *God's name* let us *speak* while there is time;
Now when the padlocks for our lips are forging,
SILENCE IS CRIME!"

Since deciding to deliver a discourse on the subject now before us, a document has been put into my hands,

containing an "Address to the Clergy of Massachusetts," unanimously adopted at a large meeting of Fugitive Slaves, held last month in the city of Boston. With your kind permission I will read it in this connection : and you will excuse me if my text is not announced till about the middle of the Sermon. Now, let us all attend to this appeal, for, says the inspired word, "He that shutteth his ear to the cry of the poor and needy, shall yet cry himself, and shall not be heard."

ADDRESS TO THE CLERGY OF MASSACHUSETTS.

"WE, the trembling, proscribed, and hunted fugitives from chattel slavery, now scattered through the various towns and villages of Massachusetts, and momentarily liable to be seized by the strong arm of government, and hurried back to stripes, tortures, and a bondage, one hour of which is fraught with more misery than ages of that which your fathers rose in rebellion to oppose — most humbly, importunately, and by the mercies of Christ, implore you to lift up your voices, like a trumpet, against the Fugitive Slave Bill recently adopted by Congress, and designed for our sure and immediate re-enslavement.

You claim, in a special sense, to be witnesses for God — the ambassadors of Him who came to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound. As you would be clear of the blood of all men, it is for you to give to the down-trodden and the oppressed your deepest sympathies, and to hold up to reprobation those who frame mischief by a law. It is for you to declare the supremacy of the eternal law of God over all human enactments, whether men will hear or forbear.

After years of unrequited labor ; of enforced degradation ; of inconceivable misery — we have succeeded in making our escape from the southern house of bondage, and are now attempting to lead quiet and peacea-

ble lives in this Commonwealth, and by expanding our faculties, and cultivating our moral nature, to glorify God in our bodies and spirits, which are his. By the recent law of Congress it is made a highly criminal act to shelter us from the slave-hunter, or to refuse to participate in our capture, at the command of the appointed commissioners.

Now, therefore, by the solemn injunction of a Christian apostle, Remember them that are in bonds as bound with them, we implore you, from your pulpits to denounce that iniquitous law!

By the command of Christ, Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you do ye even so them, denounce the law!

By all the horrors compressed into that system of slavery, which Wesley has justly styled the sum of all villainies, denounce the law!

By the cherished memories of Pilgrim fathers and Revolutionary sires, denounce the law!

By your warm approval of your country's Declaration of Independence, denounce the law!

By your belief in the scriptural affirmation, that by one God we are all created, and that he hath made of one blood all nations of men, to dwell on all the face of the earth, denounce the law!

By all the woes and warnings pronounced by the prophets against those who refuse to hide the outcast, and bewray him that wandereth — who decree unrighteous decrees, and write grievousness which they have prescribed, to turn aside the needy from judgment — denounce the law!

Thus will you exalt the Christian religion; oppose the mightiest obstacle that stands in the way of human redemption; exert such a moral influence as shall break the rod of the oppressor; secure for yourselves the blessings of those who are ready to perish; and hear the thrilling declaration in the great day of judgment, Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto me."

It matters not who first composed and wrote that appeal; there is something within me which beats responsive to every word of it; and may this right hand forget her cunning, this heart be palsied, and this tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth if I fail to speak accordingly! Yet, God forbid that I should deliver a *political discourse*, a *party harangue*, or any thing but a GOSPEL SERMON. I would fain plant myself on the everlasting word of the living God, and preach the religion of his Son, Jesus Christ. And being thus rooted and grounded in the truth as revealed to us from heaven, "the rocks might be made to fly from their firm base as soon as I." Yes, with all humility, and yet with fixedness of purpose, let me say, that

"Here will I plant myself; here, on the brink,
The very verge of *liberty*! Although
Contention rise high, mix earth with heaven,
And roll the ruin on,—here will I stand
And breast me to the shock."

Fellow-citizens and Christian friends, the new Fugitive Law, if it be carried out to its fullest extent, will *enslave you and me* as well as the *black* man, — IT WILL MAKE SLAVES OF US ALL. Talk not of the *Free States*! there are none such now! nor will there be until this "odious" law is repealed. Methinks you cannot *read* such a law without feeling your blood to boil, and course along through your veins with a swifter flow than usual; without experiencing *shuddering* sensations, and a stinging consciousness that the best instincts and promptings of our nature are grossly insulted! Why, there are clauses in it expressly forbidding us to obey the plainest injunctions of the Bible; prohibiting our sheltering and aiding the pursued outcast, as the Scriptures require; inflicting heavy penalties if we presume, under certain circumstances, to obey the direction of our Saviour, "Do unto others as you would have them do to you."

I offer no apology for introducing this subject to-day;

all the apology I have to make is for not presenting it sooner. Here I have been preaching for more than six months, delivering in this house not less than fifty sermons, on about forty different themes, quite a number of them suggested by passing occurrences; as, the Ordination of a new minister, California excitement, death of Gen. Taylor, Lynnfield disaster, murder of Dr. Parkman, power of Music, the fading glories of Autumn, &c., but never, till now, devoting a discourse to the Slavery question, and the rights of our brother Fugitive.

My text you will find in Deut. 23 : 15, 16. — THOU SHALT NOT DELIVER UNTO HIS MASTER THE SERVANT WHICH IS ESCAPED FROM HIS MASTER UNTO THEE: HE SHALL DWELL WITH THEE, EVEN AMONG YOU, IN THAT PLACE WHICH HE SHALL CHOOSE, IN ONE OF THY GATES, WHICH IT LIKETH HIM BEST: THOU SHALT NOT OPPRESS HIM.

It will not be so much my endeavor to explain to you what is the *law of the land* in regard to the fugitive slaves, as what is the *Law of God*, that "higher law" at which atheistic men do sneer and scout, but which is above all human enactments, and on which all righteous laws are based. I say I shall not expend many words in defining the nature and specifying the requirements of the Fugitive Slave Bill — that Bill of Abominations — about which so much is being said at the present time, (you can learn sufficiently with reference to its teachings and its meanings from your newspapers and politicians,) but the great question for me to settle in your hearing is, "LORD WHAT WILT THOU HAVE US TO DO?" We are to ask counsel of *Jehovah* from the revelation that he hath given us, and if in obeying his injunctions we come in contact with a man-made law, contravening the Divine, we are to treat that law as *Daniel the prophet* treated a law signed by king Darius, forbidding him to pray unto his God. Would that all *modern Daniels*, like the prophet of old, were loyally true to conscience and to God, fearlessly maintaining amid the bitterest assailings of unprincipled partizans.

THE PARAMOUNT SUPREMACY OF THE DIVINE AUTHORITY OVER

ALL HUMAN LAWS AND CONSTITUTIONS ; a truth easily understood by your *children* and the simplest hearted *Christian*, but too often overlooked by those in high office. The Hon. Wm. H. Seward had the boldness recently in the Senate Chamber of these United States, to advocate that Higher law, the claims of which are every Sabbath iterated and reiterated in ten thousand pulpits throughout our land ; and you know the opposition which he encountered from the majority of his brethren. May the Lord speedily convert the hearts of those men, bringing them to see that “there be higher than they,” and that they are amenable to the tribunal of Him whose kingdom ruleth over all.

But what is our duty to the fugitive, according to the teachings of God’s infallible word? To the law, and to the testimony ; and what saith it? “Deliver the poor and needy ; rid them out of the hand of the wicked. Take counsel, execute judgment ; make thy shadows as the night in the midst of the noon-day ; hide the outcasts, bewray not him that wandereth. Let mine outcasts dwell with thee : be thou a covert to them from the face of the spoiler. O house of David, thus saith the Lord ; execute judgment in the morning, and deliver him that is spoiled, out of the hand of the oppressor. Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. If thou forbear to deliver them that are drawn unto death, and those that are ready to be slain ; if thou sayest, Behold, we knew it not ; doth not he that pondereth the heart consider it? and shall he not render to every man according to his work? Thou shalt not deliver unto his master the servant that is escaped from his master unto thee.” — Ps. 82 : 4. Isa. 16 : 3. Jer. 21 : 12. Mat. 22 : 39. Prov. 24 : 11, 12. Dt. 23 : 15. See also James 2 : 13. Pr. 31 : 8, 9. Mal. 2 : 10. Isa. 58 : 5, 6. Heb. 13 : 3. Mat. 7 : 12. There is still another remarkable portion of Holy Writ which I cannot forbear citing, as peculiarly appropriate to the present condition of things in our country. Pray listen to it : — “*Among my people are found wicked men ; they lay wait as he that setteth snares ; they set a trap,*

they CATCH MEN. * * * *Shall I not visit for these things, saith the Lord: shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?*—Jer. 5: 26, 29.

It does seem as though either one of these passages of Scripture must *forever settle* the question before us for discussion, must forever establish the rightfulness and justice, the privilege and duty of countenancing, encouraging, and aiding in every way in our power those needy and suffering ones escaped from bondage; that “law or no law, constitution or no constitution,” *we are sacredly bound to assist the poor fugitive in the retainment of his inalienable rights.* Whether it be right to hearken to the voice of God, and the voice of conscience, more than to any laws graven on parchment and registered in the statute-books of a nation, judge ye.

The directions contained in my text, as well as the ten commandments, were a part of the national law of the Hebrews, and their authority and binding force would have ceased ages ago were it not for the fact that they are *the expression of a moral obligation*, and founded on principles of *universal application.* The command in the text is unlimited in its terms, having no qualifications, and commends itself to our reason and judgment as one of the most philanthropic enactments ever entered on human or divine record.

But you need not be told by me that *a law just the reverse of this* has recently passed the *American Congress.* And you need not be informed that there is a deep, an intense, a tremendous excitement all through the free States of the North and West on account thereof. If one visits his friends at home from house to house, or travels abroad by stage, railroad or steamboat, this seems to be the chief topic of conversation; it is the chief question of debate in village Lyceums and private circles. Not only are “indignation meetings” being held in some parts of the South because of the recent admission of California, “the youthful Queen of the Pacific, with her robes of Freedom, gorgeously inlaid with gold,” and because of the abolishment of the Slave Trade in the

District of Columbia; but indignation meetings are also multiplying in our own neighborhood, both among white and colored citizens, in consequence of the enactment of a law outraging the dictates of humanity, the sense of justice and of right implanted within us, and the noblest impulses of the human heart, while it comes in direct conflict with the moral attributes of Jehovah! It forbids us, under certain circumstances, to aid the panting fugitive in his praiseworthy strugglings for liberty; threatening us if we presume to give him food and clothing and lodging, or a ride in our carriage towards the north star, provided we are informed he is a slave, and that the officers of the law are in pursuit of him; making it criminal to offer him a crust of bread or a "cup of cold water" to refresh him on his journey; allowing the fugitive no trial by jury and no testimony in his own behalf; bribing the law-officer by paying twice as large a fee when the alleged slave is remanded into bondage as when the proof is insufficient to authorize the delivery; and "commanding all good citizens to assist in the prompt and efficient execution of the law" whenever their services are required for that purpose by the marshals or commissioners who are empowered to "summon to their aid the bystander."

Now such enactments and such requisitions are altogether too repugnant and obnoxious, too inhuman and barbarous to need any argument against them. For one, I look upon this law with *horror*, perfect HORROR, as a black Molock of cruelty, a giant of injustice, and I can think of no terms in the vocabulary of our language sufficiently strong to express my detestation of its requirements. Had it been concocted among the demons of Pandemonium, it could hardly have been more damnable. At a time in the world's history when the monarchical governments of Europe, and even Algiers, and the savage tribes of Africa, are moving in the direction of liberty, we in "Columbia's happy land" are not only riveting chains more closely on the negro, but actually *enslaving one another* — leaving none free — making it a

punishable offence to obey the simplest precepts of the gospel of Jesus. O "tell it not in Gath! publish it not in the streets of Askelon! lest the uncircumcised do triumph," and we become a "hissing and a byword" to all the nations of the earth. In the language of Daniel Webster, "There is something greater than arbitrary and despotic power; the lightning has its power, and the whirlwind has its power, and the earthquake has its power; but there is something among men more capable of shaking despotic power than lightning, whirlwind, or earthquake, — viz. *the threatened indignation of a civilized world.*"

When that extraordinary and most atrocious bill, which is so scandalous a libel upon our free institutions, was first passed, some there were who really thought and sagely remarked that we should have a "calm," and that the slavery question was "settled." A CALM! my hearers! Aye, such an one as precedes the hurricane which uproots the sturdy oak in yonder forest, overturns many a dwelling house, and sends consternation all abroad. The question of slavery SETTLED! Then is the moral struggle between truth and falsehood, Christianity and heathenism, heaven above and hell beneath, at an end; and God's controversy with our apostate race, which has been carried on for near 6,000 years, forever closed. I tell you, dear friends, that *liberty* and *slavery* are *antagonistic principles*, diametrically opposed and irreconcilably at variance with each other; hence they cannot peacefully and quietly exist together in the same community, the same nation, or the same world, however great may be the exertions of a certain few to bring about "compromises" and concessions.

Already are there unmistakable premonitions of *a storm at hand* — a storm that will try the souls of men, and shake this republic of ours from centre to circumference. The passage of such a nefarious bill in this late day of human progress and advancement will arouse the country as it was never aroused before, for it aims a deadly blow at the very heart of freedom. Now I can-

not believe there is a single individual in Stoneham who would turn the hunted fugitive from his door, or refuse him the luxury of a plentiful dinner, or scruple to encourage him in his escape. I will not allow myself to have so poor an opinion of any man in town, until the contrary is proved to me; and the reason I dwell upon this subject to-day, is, that I may, if possible, deepen and strengthen in your minds the conviction that *you* "ought to obey God rather than man;" that **MOSES' FUGITIVE SLAVE BILL**, embodied in my text, should be preferred to the bill which has passed the U. S. Congress, and received the official sanction of President Fillmore. Would that our *modern Moses*, one of the greatest Hebrew and Greek scholars that America has ever produced, now resident on yon "Hill of Zion," about a dozen miles from here, who has recently, as you know, written a work titled "Conscience and the Constitution," wherein he plausibly argues in favor of the recapture of fugitive slaves, might abandon his unscriptural positions, and endorsing the views of *Moses the elder*, that divinely-appointed leader of the ancient Hebrews, proclaim in the ears of the people, "Thou shalt not deliver unto his master the servant which is escaped from his master unto thee."

Neither of the senators from this State voted in favor of the new Fugitive Slave Law, and but one out of our ten representatives. And although Secretary Webster, of whom we have formerly been so proud, has been one of its chief supporters, "GOD BLESS THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS" for having so little to do with the passage of this infernal measure, for having so few in public office treacherous to freedom, and traitors to the law of God!

Nearly all the religious papers of the North have spoken in distinct and decided terms of condemnation of the law now referred to; and furthermore have taken the ground that we are justifiable in disregarding the same, maintaining that the spirit of the parable of the good Samaritan, and the whole drift of Inspiration,

would lead to the violation of such a law, in obedience to the higher law of God. I have taken pains during the past few weeks to examine the leading organs of the different denominations, — Baptists, Methodists, Congregationalists, Universalists and Unitarians, — and have been gladdened by ascertaining that they bring in similar testimony. Would that the same were true of all secular and political newspapers!

Yet it is exceedingly trying for ministers of the gospel and religious editors to find ourselves placed in a position, in consequence of the votes of corrupt politicians and heartless demagogues, whereby it is rendered necessary for us to *encourage disobedience to law*. We have always been and always desire to be law-loving and law-abiding citizens. We wish to promulge no dangerous doctrines; but inculcate a profound respect, veneration, and reverence for those laws on which the stability and permanency of our republican institutions must evermore rest. But, (there is a *but* and an *if* in this case,) BUT when our law-makers, taking advantage of this New England sentiment and feeling, presume to “frame iniquity into a law,” expecting us to obey it, we are necessitated by our oath of allegiance to God, deliberately to tell them, “Your unrighteous, unchristian laws we shall disregard.” And neither the Biblical learning of Prof. Stuart of Andover, nor the sophistry and eloquence of a distinguished Statesman can operate to change our course, — “so help us God!”

The principles which I now advance, are those which have been embraced and carried out by the reformers of every age. As another expresses it: — “The early Christians were all law-breakers, and many of our modern Missionaries are law-breakers; the Puritans were law-breakers; Luther was a law-breaker; the Apostles were law-breakers. Each and all of them found sin framed into a law and treated it as they did any other sin.” Of old time the Romans commanded the Christians to pay their devotions to Jupiter. They deemed it the highest wickedness so to do, and like Peter and

John, said to the civil authorities, "Whether it be right to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye." Cyprian says, "What more glorious than not to have obeyed profane laws." A young Numidian Christian was put to the torture for trampling under foot an unholy law, and while on the rack, his tormentor says to him, "You ought to have obeyed the royal edict;" but his answer is, "I now only revere the law of God." Another was arrested for *harboring runaway Christians*; and when he pleaded before the court, "I could not decline to receive my brethren," the judge sternly said, "The imperial edict ought to have outweighed such considerations." He nobly replied, "God is more than Emperor." Verily, my hearers, *God's law is supreme* — it *towers up high above all earthly legislation*. "So thought the persecuted Christians under the Roman Emperor, and under the Papacy. So thought the Covenanters and the Quakers, the Puritans, and the Pilgrims," who, amid tears and blood, have laid the foundations of our most beneficent institutions.

But, as has been well remarked, these are just the men who make the best subjects. They uphold and defend magistrates, yea, they are the strength and supporting pillars of the republic. It is only when human laws evidently and palpably conflict with the divine, that they oppose the government, not shrinking from the consequences, but cheerfully enduring the penalty, leaving God to judge between them and the State. In the days of Nebuchadnezzar, there were found three holy children, Shadreck, Meshech and Abednego, disobeying the laws of the land. But are they to be *blamed* for it? And is that *fourth personage* who appeared among them "in form like unto the Son of God," walking in the midst of the fiery furnace, to be blamed also for sanctioning their violation of law? Beware, lest ye charge with foolishness the *Lord Jesus Christ*, who is always with those who suffer in defence of the truth!

About two centuries ago, as I learn from a recently published discourse, King Charles the II. made a law

to punish with death the remnant of the judges who had brought his father's head to the block. A reward was offered for their apprehension, while severe penalties hung over the heads of those who should presume to harbor or conceal them. Several of those judges escaped to this country. Many Americans thought their condemnation of the king's father one of the best things ever done. Ought they therefore to deliver up said fugitives instead of affording them shelter and protection! The clergyman of a town where one of them was concealed, preached a timely sermon from the text, "Beware not him that wandereth;" while the British officers were completely foiled in their attempts to discover and arrest the objects of their search. And one, at least, of those runaway judges, it is said, dwelt in peace for above a score of years here in New England.

But, say some, this is not a parallel case — nor at all analagous to the point under consideration; for we of the North, through our representatives, have entered into a solemn "compact" with the slaveholders to assist in recapturing the fugitive negro; hence we are obligated to fulfil the engagement. Now, the utter fallaciousness of such reasoning can, I think, be easily shown. For, supposing each one of us had not merely by *proxy*, but *personally* pledged ourselves to carry this iniquitous law into execution, are not "bad promises better broken than kept?" Nothing can be plainer than that a compact which *we* or our *fathers* have made to perpetrate a *wrong deed, is not binding*. If a degree of guilt be incurred in making such a compact, there is still greater guilt in fulfilling it.

"Though we break our fathers' promise, we have nobler duties first;
The traitor to *humanity* is the traitor most accurst;
Man is more than constitutions; better rot beneath the sod,
Than be true to earthly States, while we are doubly false to God!"

Once on a time—perhaps you have read the story, possibly you have — forty men entered into a solemn compact neither to eat nor to drink until they had slain the

great apostle to the Gentiles. But were they hence in duty bound, in spite of all misgivings of conscience, to kill St. Paul? Herod made a compact with the daughter of Herodius, while bewitched by her dancing, to give whatsoever she might ask; but because she claimed the head of John the Baptist, was he morally obligated to put Christ's forerunner to death? Judas Iscariot, whose name has been handed down to us covered all over with infamy, in an evil hour, when "Satan had entered into him," agreed with the chief priests to betray his Lord and Master unto them for thirty pieces of silver; but after that rash and wicked bargain, is he excusable for being accessory to the murder of the Son of God?

But to return to the case before us. The great Father of all mankind says, "Feed the hungry; clothe the naked; be kind to the poor; love thy neighbor." Human law, brandishing its sword, says, "Nay! you shall do no such thing, if that neighbor happens to be a man with a dark skin, who is fleeing from the catchers of slaves." On the supposition that you did once make a compact with others to obey such a law, what is evidently your duty in the premises? Why, certainly, to repent thereof; with deep self-abhorrence, disregard the compact to sin against God, and henceforth, "do the thing that is right," be the event what it may. Having washed your arms up to your elbows in blood and crime, must you plunge all in over, because of some constitutional stipulations? No! but sincerely repenting of having made such a compact with the devil, such a "covenant with death and agreement with hell," take hold and *help with all your heart and might the innocent refugee*; and if you are made to feel the crushing weight of the law, you will find me near your side, and *we will perish together*, assured that others will rise up to take our places. "We would sooner see our right arm cut off, than it should reach forth to stay for one moment the fugitive from bondage. We would see our dwelling in flames, sooner than shut its doors against him."

To send a human being back into a state of vassalage, where the right of self-ownership, self-government, and all we hold dear, will be ruthlessly and forever torn from him ; to involve him the second time in a condition, where, in the language of the southern code, he will "be deemed sold, taken, reputed and adjudged in law to be a chattel personal in the hands of an owner and possessor, and their executors and administrators, to all intents, constructions and purposes whatsoever," is undeniably in opposition to the will of God and the inculcations of Holy Writ, if there be any God in the universe, and if there is any such thing as love or humanity taught in this blessed book!

That servants under the Old Dispensation were not recognized as *things*, or as *property*, may be inferred by contrasting the text with a passage contained in the chapter immediately preceding it. We there find (Deut. 22 : 1-3,) these directions : "Thou shalt not see thy brother's ox or his sheep go astray and hide thyself from them ; thou shalt in any case bring them again unto thy brother. And if thy brother be not nigh unto thee, or if thou know him not, then thou shalt bring it unto thine own house, and it shall be with thee till thy brother seek it, and thou shalt restore it to him again. In like manner shalt thou do with his ass ; and so shalt thou do with his raiment and all lost things of thy brother, which he hath lost and thou hast found." Now mark the heaven-wide difference between such requirements and the one contained in our text : "*Thou shalt not deliver unto his master the servant &c.*"

But who are those who are the severest in their denunciations of all violations of an unholy treaty, and all disobedience to unrighteous laws ? Why, as a general thing, they are the very men at the North the *least regardful of wise and wholesome laws* ; looking without disapprobation on the constant sale of poisonous liquors in our midst ; the printing, selling, and circulating, contrary to law, of immoral books and obscene pictures ; the illegal desecration of the Sabbath day ; and the un-

lawful disturbance and breaking up of reformatory meetings ; — and the very men at the South who have rode rough-shod over the Declaration of Independence in their support of a system, pernicious and accursed, which declares open hostility to its “ self-evident truths ” and holiest provisions. Men, who, to use the figurative but striking and forceful words of another, have “ lynched the Freedom of Speech ; and tarred and feathered the Right of Petition ; and kidnapped the privilege of Free Locomotion ; and rode our Democracy on a rail before the world ; and dashed in the windows of our National Honor ; and burnt our Christianity at the stake ; and made a foot-mat of the Constitution to wipe their despotic feet on ! ” *Shame, SHAME on such gross hypocrisy !*

Now, it makes a vast deal of difference whether we set at nought a law confessedly good, which recommends itself to the common sense of mankind, or one which is at manifest variance with the golden rule and the precepts of our holy religion. South Carolina nullification is to be condemned, but not the nullification of a law which is a terror to well-doers and a praise to them that do ill. God’s law, whether written on tables of stone or on the human heart ; whether recorded in the Book of Revelation or inscribed on the consciences of our race, is the great Law of laws, and ought to be implicitly obeyed.

An individual sinks very low indeed when he strives to alienate his “ inalienable ” birthright by consenting to be a slave, or barter away his manhood by volunteering his services as a slave-catcher ; but lower still does he sink when making or defending laws which tighten the bonds of the oppressed. Yet some such there are. Negroes are not the only slaves, by any means !

“ O ! see that recreant throng, the chaff from Freedom’s threshing floor,
Bowling low to bloody Molock, as they meet him at his door ;
See how with meek and cringing smile, and humble mien they pass,
Ready to stoop and play their part in legislation’s farce !

White men are in the auction mart ! see down the lengthened line
How through the helpers of the wrong, the Arnolds of our time ;

'Mid a hecatomb of victims, who have sunk 'neath slavery's blight,
Behold a costlier offering, a gloomier, sadder sight!

Hail! leaders of a nation! how on the world's broad page
Shall your names be kept for warning to every coming age!
Hail, defenders of a people's fame, what curses shall ye win,
Whose *highest moral reach is but a compromise with sin.*

But courage, men of truth, tho' slavery on ye frown,
The wide earth is beholding, and the angels bending down;
Still stand your ground, give freedom tongue, strike home in matchless
 might,
Still strive ye for the human race, and God defend the right!"

"We have been taught," once said Mr. Webster, "to regard a representative of the people as a sentinel on the watch-tower of *liberty*. Is he to be blind, though visible danger approaches? Is he to be deaf, though sounds of peril fill the air? *Is he to be dumb while a thousand duties impel him to raise the cry of alarm?* Is he not rather to catch the lowest whisper that breathes intention or purpose of encroachment on the public liberties, and to give his voice breath and utterance at the first appearance of danger?" Would that all our public servants, whether on the floor of Congress, or in the pulpits of the land, might heed those significant words, and

"Speak in a slumbering people's ear,
As truth should e'er be spoken,
Until the dead in sin shall hear,
The fetter's link be broken,"

until the "self-evident truth" that all are endowed by their Maker with the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, and that other doctrine, growing out of it, in favor of immediate and universal emancipation, shall be cordially embraced by all the inhabitants of the land.

"On the general question of slavery," said the distinguished statesman already quoted, in a speech of his in 1837, "a great portion of the community is already strongly excited. The subject has not only attracted attention as a question of *politics*, but it has *struck a far*

deeper-toned chord. It has arrested the *religious feeling* of the country ; it has taken strong hold on the *consciences* of men. He is a rash man, indeed, little conversant with human nature, and especially has he a very erroneous estimate of the character of the people of this country, who supposes that a feeling of this kind, is to be trifled with, or despised. It will assuredly cause itself to be respected. To coerce it into silence ; to endeavor to restrain its free expression ; to seek to compress and confine it, warm as it is, and more heated as such endeavors would inevitably render it, — should all this be attempted, there is nothing even in the Constitution, or in the Union itself, which would not be endangered by the explosion that might follow.”

I present myself as one of the advocates of our fugitive brethren, at a time when their claims cannot easily be shuffled out of sight, or disregarded. Without fear of contradiction from any in this audience, I assert their perfect equality with the whole brotherhood of man, and their inherent right to liberty. And I need go through no process of reasoning to prove to you the truthfulness of this assertion. As freemen and as Christians we require no labored arguments to convince our minds that to enslave, or take captive one of our fellow-men, who has not forfeited his liberty by the commission of crime, is to up-lift the battle-axe of sedition against the throne of Jehovah, and presumptuously dare the live thunders of Omnipotence ! for the divine law, written with ineffaceable characters upon every man’s heart, authenticates and attests the validity of his title to freedom !

“FLEECY LOCKS AND BLACK COMPLEXION
CANNOT FORFEIT NATURE’S CLAIM.”

Alvan Stewart, counsellor at law, in one of his celebrated pleas, uses the following language : —“ The proposition that the colored people, held in bondage, are men, born free and independent by the law of nature, is one above all demonstration, outstrips all logical deduction, and addresses itself to our every perception for its truth.

Antiquity and to-day, every degree of latitude and longitude, utter the same response, showing that God is their Father, that all men are brethren of one blood, that the sweets of life, the joys of liberty, the hopes of happiness, are the gifts of the great Father to each of his children, with a power and privilege forever to climb the ascending heights of eternity by the merits of his Son! increasing in knowledge and happiness through the endless day of Heaven!" Well may colored Americans in their gatherings pass such a resolution as this: "Resolved, That *God willed us free; man willed us slaves. We will as God wills; God's will be done.*"

Dear friends, if a slave-hunter, or his agent, demand the delivering up of a fugitive who has escaped from his master unto you, just say to him, NO, SIR, — not till you show us a "bill of sale from the Almighty;" not till you produce a title-deed, signed by the great Proprietor of all things! It was well decided by a Vermont judge, under the Fugitive Slave Law of 1793, that nothing short of a bill of sale from Almighty God, could establish a title in one man to the body and soul of another.

"Tell me not of rights," exclaims Lord Brougham, "of the property of the planter in his slaves. In vain you speak of the laws which sanction such a claim. There is a law above all the enactments of human codes; it is the law written by the finger of God upon the heart of man; and by that law, eternal and unchangable, while men despise fraud, and loathe rapine, and abhor blood, they shall reject with indignation the wild and guilty fantasy that man can hold property in man." Says Blackstone, an author that all lawyers love to study, "If any law require us to commit crime, we are bound to transgress that law." Fortescue says, "The law of nature, being coeval with mankind, and dictated by God himself, is of course superior in obligation to any other. It is binding all over the globe, in all countries, at all times. *No human laws have any validity if contrary to this*; and such of them as are valid, derive all their force and all their authority, mediately or immediately, from this original." And, says another

noted jurist, "The inferior law must give way to the superior; man's laws to God's laws." Hence, a law passed by a majority of our Congressmen at Washington for the recapture of Fugitive Slaves, is not, and cannot be binding.

And before any complain of the presentation of this subject from the sacred desk, on the great hearing-day of the people, let them gag every fourth of July orator, and cease to observe a yearly festival in honor of liberty; let them repudiate the glorious doctrines of the Bible, and brand their revolutionary forefathers as a set of madmen or crazy fanatics; let them abstain from all professions of sympathy with the Polish exiles, or with Hungary's ill-fated sons, who have been ground into the dust by the iron heel of Russian and Austrian despotism; and no longer style this the "home of the free, and the land of the brave!"

Dearly beloved, do as you please; each to his own Master must stand or fall. "Truth be our watchword; usefulness our aim; wedded to no party; by no sect enslaved." For one, I am determined, on suitable occasions, when the exigencies of the times require it, to do what I can for the enlightening of the people in regard to the enormous injustice of the system of slavery, whether obliged to stand all alone in the world, or whether I find round about me a band of sympathising friends. And then if "Ichabod" is ever written on our country's glory, and the slave population, maddened into fury, "dash their galling chains asunder, and wade through blood to freedom," over a nation laid in ruins, I may have the sweet consciousness of having done what I could to avert the same.

"Now by our fathers' ashes! where's the spirit
Of the true-hearted and the unshackled gone?
Sons of old freemen, do we but inherit
Their names alone.

Is the old Pilgrim spirit quenched within us?
Stoops the proud manhood of our souls so low
That mammon's lure or party's wiles can win us
To silence now?

From each and all, if God hath not forsaken
 Our land, and left us to an evil choice,
 Loud as the summer thunderbolt shalt waken
 A people's voice.

Sons of the best of fathers, will ye falter
 With all they left you perilled and at a stake?
 Ho! once again on freedom's holy altar
 The fire awake!

Prayer-strengthened for the trial, come together,
 Put on a harness for a moral fight,
 And with the blessing of your heavenly Father
 Maintain the right."

And in the noble maintainance of the True and the Right, irrespective of the frowns of enemies or the flatteries of friends, ever bear in mind the direction of the text: "Thou shalt not deliver unto his master the servant that is escaped from his master unto thee: He shall dwell with thee, even among you, in that place which he shall choose, in one of thy gates which it liketh him best; thou shalt not oppress him." Neither fear the anathemas of time-serving, expediency-loving politicians, nor be influenced by the grave cautions of timid conservatives in the church. Be not afraid of those who kill the body, and after that can do no more; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell, where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched; yea, I say unto you, in the language of our Saviour, fear Him!

Horace Mann, in that remarkable letter to his constituents, in which he says, "My words have been cool as the telegraphic wires while my feelings have been like the lightning that runs through them," closes thus: "Did I not oppose slavery with all the powers and faculties which God hath given me, I should see myriads of agonized faces glaring out upon me more terrible than Duncan's at Macbeth; and I would rather feel an assassin's poignard in my breast than forever hereafter see the air-drawn dagger of a guilty imagination. In Massachusetts the great drama of the Rev-

lution began. Some of its heroes yet survive amongst us. At Lexington, at Concord, and on Bunker Hill, the grass still grows greener, where the soil was fattened with the blood of our fathers. If in the Providence of God we must be vanquished in this contest let it be by force of the overmastering and inscrutable powers above us, and not by our own base desertion." **THERE SPEAKS A MAN!**

My hearers, shall we, because of human enactments, sacrifice conscience, and compromise principle, and disobey the law of God? Shall we refuse to succor those who are drawn unto death and ready to be slain? Must we permit padlocks to be hung upon our lips, or refuse to open our mouths for the suffering and the dumb? Woe unto those who deprive the hireling of his wages, and give him nought for his work; that decree unrighteous decrees, and turn aside the stranger from his right! And woe unto those who join hands with the task-master, and assist in forging additional fetters for the limbs of the enslaved! Let all such bear in mind that every attribute of the Almighty is on the side of the oppressed. Well may we tremble for this country when we remember that God is just, and that though for a time iniquity triumph, his justice will not forever sleep. Behold, says James, the hire of the laborers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of those who have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of hosts.

"Out from this land of bondage 'tis decreed our slaves shall go,
And signs to us are offered as erst to Phariseh;
If we are blind, their exodus, like Israel's of yore,
Through a red sea is doomed to be, whose surges are of gore."

Just allow a few more of our colored brethren, who have tasted the sweets of liberty and breathed the pure air of freedom among the hills and valleys of New England, to be kidnapped and forced back into bondage, and they will be likely to sow there the seeds of disaffection and revolt more than would any army of

abolitionists! And then we need not be surprised if any mail should bring into our Post-Office the appalling news that *insurrections* have become the "order of the day" and the chief work of the night in the Slave States of this Union, and that the land is likely to be filled with the unspeakable evils of civil strife and bloodshed!

No wonder that some of the most candid, far-seeing men, residing in the slave States, declare the new law exceedingly injudicious and unwise, and as calculated to do the South itself more harm than good. But "the end is not yet."

I tell you, my friends, that if we as a nation persist much longer in grinding to the dust one sixth part of our population, and turn our officers into men-hunters and men-stealers for the seizure and re-enslavement of the fugitive, there may yet be given us *blood* to drink, for are we not worthy? *He that hath an ear to hear let him hear!* nor make a mock of these things as idle apprehensions, or mere bug-bears to frighten the nervous. GOOD GOD! AWAKE US FROM OUR SLUMBERINGS ERE IT BE TOO LATE! We are now forewarned, as plainly as if Gabriel were to protrude his mighty trumpet through the sky and blow a startling blast in all our ears, that unless justice be meted out to the oppressed a gory tide of desolation will roll the country through more horrible than the scenes of St. Domingo!

“Wo if it come with storm and blood, and fire,
 When midnight darkness veils the earth and sky!
 Wo to the innocent babe — the guilty sire —
 Mother and daughter — friends of kindred tie!
 Stranger and citizen alike shall die.
 Red-handed slaughter his revenge shall feed,
 And Havoc yell its ominous death-cry,
 And wild Despair in vain for mercy plead,
 While earth aghast shall shrink and sicken at the deed!

In that masterly speech on the subject of Slavery in the Territories and the consequences of the Dissolution of the Union, delivered by the successor of John

Quincy Adams in the United States House of Representatives, February 15, 1850, may be found the following language, pregnant with meaning :

“Among human passions, one of the strongest and boldest is the love of liberty, which dwells in every bosom. In the educated and civilized this love of liberty is a regulated but paramount desire ; in the ignorant and debased it is a wild, vehement instinct. ’Tis an indestructible part of the nature of man. Weakened it may be, but it cannot be destroyed. It is a thread of asbestos in the web of the soul, which all the fires of oppression cannot consume. With the creation of every human being, God creates this love of liberty anew. The slave shares it with his master and it has descended into his bosom from the same high source. Whether dormant or wakeful, it only awaits an opportunity to become the mastering impulse of the soul. Civil war is that opportunity. Under oppression it bides its time. Civil war is the fullness of time. Imbedded in a material spontaneously combustible, it laughs at fire. It is literal truth that the South fosters within its homes three millions of latent rebellions. Has it any barriers to keep the spirit of liberty, which has electrified the old world, from crossing its own borders, and quickening its bondmen into mutinous life? If there is no Spartacus among them, with his lofty heroism and consummate skill for attack and defence, is the race of Nat Turners extinct, who, in their religious musings, and their dumb melancholy, take the impulses of their own passions for the inspiration of God, and after prayer and the eucharist, proceed to massacre and conflagration? In ignorant and imbruted minds, a thousand motives work which we cannot divine. A thousand excitements madden them, which we cannot control. It may be a text of Scripture, it may be the contents of a wine-vault ; but the result will be the same, — havoc wherever there is wealth, murder wherever there is life, violation wherever there is chastity. Let but this wild-fire of a servile insurrection break out in but one

place in a State; nay, in but ten places or five places in all the fifteen States; and then throughout their length and breadth there will be no more quiet sleep. The mother will clasp her infant to her breast, and while she clasps it, die a double death. But where will the slaves find arms? *Furor arma ministrat.* Rage will supply their weapons. Read the history of those slaves who have escaped from bondage; mark their endurance and contrivance, and let incredulity cease forever. They have hid themselves under coverts, dug holes and burrowed in the earth for concealment, sunk themselves in ponds, and sustained life by breathing through a reed, until their pursuers had passed by; crushed themselves into boxes, but of half a coffin's dimensions, to be nailed up and transported hundreds of miles, as merchandize; and, in this horrible condition, have endured hunger and thirst, and standing on the head, without a groan or a sigh; have wandered abroad, almost fasting for forty days and forty nights, like Christ in the wilderness;—and will men who devise such things and endure such things be balked in their purposes of hope and of revenge when the angel of destruction, in the form of the angel of Liberty, descends into their breasts?"

Believe me, when I tell you, that an electric thrill, caused by a touch of the finger of the Almighty, *may* yet speed its way through the hearts of the entire slave population, constraining them to rise simultaneously, and instead of allowing themselves longer to be chattelized and ranked with four-footed beasts, put forth *their* "Declaration of Independence," and take for their motto — LIBERTY OR DEATH.

Supposing they should uprising as one man, and destroy those masters who have no moral right "to buy and sell, to barter, whip, and hold in chains a being of celestial make," fighting their way to freedom over the mangled bodies of the dead and dying! Supposing, that instead of being longer subjected to a state of vassalage "one hour of which," according to the opinion

of the great Thomas Jefferson, "is fraught with more misery than ages of that which our fathers rose in rebellion to oppose," they should "light the incendiary torch, whet the assassin's knife," and desolate a land cursed with the sweat, and groans, and tears of unrequited toil!

Let not the favored *white man* name
 Their stern appeal with words of *blame* !
 Hath *he* not with the light of heaven
 Broadly around him, *done the same* ?
 Yea, on a hundred war-fields striven ?

What are the banners ye exalt? --- the deeds
 That raised your fathers' pyramid of fame ?
 Ye show the wound that still in history bleeds,
 And talk exulting of the patriot's name.
 Then when your words have waked a kindred flame,
 And slaves behold the freedom ye adore,
 And deeper feel their sorrow and their shame,
 Ye double all the fetters that they wore,
 And press them down to earth till hope exult no more !"

If there be insurrections, and physical force is resorted to by the oppressed to bring about their emancipation, it must all be attributed to *slavery* itself and *pro-slavery agitation*. Let no one, therefore, blindly charge the blame to *anti-slavery* or *anti-slavery excitement*. As well might you charge the *ruin of sinners* to the preaching of that *gospel* which proves to them a "savor of death unto death;" and ascribe the condemnation of the lost to the blood of the Son of God which they have trampled under foot, and thereby brought upon themselves swift destruction.

Yet do not understand me, dear friends, as though I were counselling to deeds of violence; for could I make my voice to be heard throughout the slave States to-day, I would advise our colored brethren neither to take any man's life nor to harm any man's property; but whenever they can peaceably escape from bondage and secure the possession of those inestimable rights which we enjoy, the Lord inspire them with courage so to do! In the words of that Apostle

who when he sent Onesimus back to Philemon requested that he be received "not now as a servant, but *above a servant, a brother beloved,*" I would fain say to each and every bondman, "IF THOU MAYEST BE MADE FREE, USE IT RATHER." Success attend the trembling fugitive in his flight to the province of Canada, "to touch whose monarchical soil under the grateful shadow of Queen Victoria's throne," as a certain writer sarcastically expresses it, "ensures liberty to every republican slave." And may the day be hastened when there shall be at least *some free States* in this Union; when our beloved New England shall be in reality, as in name, the home of the homeless, the friend of the friendless, a resting place for the wanderer, and an "asylum for the oppressed" of our own as well as every other nation, when none shall be found in all our borders so meanly base and basely mean as to "deliver unto his master the servant which is escaped from his master unto us; but he shall dwell with us, even among us, in that place which he shall choose, in one of our gates where it liketh him best."

I have in this discourse intentionally omitted saying much with reference to the great distress into which the colored citizens of the North have been thrown by the new Fugitive Law, and of the anxiety, bordering on frenzy, which prevents many from engaging in their regular business by day or sleeping quietly by night. Nor have I alluded to the great excitement in the neighboring city of Boston in consequence of warrants lately issued for the arrest of Wm. Crafts and Ellen Crafts, our brother and sister, that noble man and noble woman who fled from Georgia some two years since by shrewdly and ingeniously disguising themselves to elude detection on their way hither, and who are as much entitled to the enjoyment of liberty's sacred rights as you or I or any person living. I say I have purposely avoided dwelling on those circumstances, from the fact that you have learned the particulars thereof through pamphlets and newspapers issued from the press.

But permit me here to say that no longer ago than yesterday my heart was unutterably pained and said dened, — for hours I was weighed down with a grief so great that it was with difficulty I could handle a pen for the finishing of this discourse, — by reading in the daily papers a telegraphic despatch from Maryland that a company of gentlemen, (?) citizens of Baltimore, (I will not call them “bloodhounds,”) were about to visit New York, Philadelphia, Boston, and other cities, for the discovery and arrest of fugitives. And now I very much fear that some of our brethren, almost as dear to me as any of the people of Stoneham, or the members of my own father’s family, “bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh,” will yet be doomed to hopeless captivity. *Oh, for the creation of a correct public sentiment* which will not permit their return to slavery! securely shielding them from the grasp of the kidnapper, rendering the *law* recently enacted a *dead letter*, yea, *null and void* to all intents and purposes whatsoever.

This new law is so framed, as you who have examined it cannot fail to perceive, that *none of us are entirely safe*. At the false swearing of some one who has sold himself body and soul to work mischief it may lay its iron hand upon one of my deacons and drag him in broad daylight from his pew in this meeting-house; it may seize one of the occupants of yonder gallery, while from his lips are proceeding the words:

“ America! ’t is of thee,
Sweet *land of liberty*,
Of thee I sing;”

nay, it may tear your minister from his pulpit, and incarcerate him in a den of felons! For if I am not taken for the color of my skin, I may possibly yet have the opportunity of transgressing the law by extending aid to a fugitive fleeing through Main Street in Stoneham from the merciless clutches of the hunters of men.

Yes, my friends, OUR PRINCIPLES MAY YET BE PUT TO THE TEST. God forbid that we should be found want-

ing in the hour of trial! or hesitate for a moment to obey the express directions of the written Word as contained in our text and numerous other portions of the Bible

Those infamous enactments which now disgrace the statute books of this professedly Christian nation, come directly between me and God; therefore, to go to God and to heaven, I see no other way but to *pass right over the law*, irrespective of the result, when a brother man needs my services.

“It is the law of God in the human soul—
 ’T ’is the law in the Word Divine —
 It shall live while the earth in its course shall roll,
 IT SHALL LIVE IN THIS HEART OF MINE!
 Let the law of the land forge its bond of wrong;
 I will help when the self-freed crave!
 For the law in my soul, bright, beaming, and strong,
 Bids me succor the flying slave!”

And if a thousand dollars fine and six months’ imprisonment be the consequence to my unworthy self, one consolation, among others, would be, that in all probability the Orthodox church and society in Stoneham would be able to secure another servant more faithful, a preacher more bold, a pastor more efficient. God being my helper, I am resolved to have my feet planted on the firm foundation of truth, as upon a rock amid the surging waves of human opinions, and no sooner obey a law which calls upon me to re-enslave one made in the image and likeness of the invisible God, the purchase of the Saviour’s blood, than I would break the Ten Commandments of the Decalogue! Established on such principles, I am willing to go to the judgment. And if others choose to take a different course, saying, “There is a lion in the way, we shall be slain in the streets,” and plead that the laws must be sustained whether “right or wrong,” let them settle it with their own consciences and their God. We cannot pause long to argue with those who exalt the *lower law* above the *higher*, any more than we can waste our breath in

quoting scriptural proof-texts to an infidel free-thinker who exalts his perverted and darkened reason above the clear sunlight of Revelation.

Now I would not say with Henry Ward Beecher, (who, by the way, is one of the very best preachers the world has known since the days of St. Paul,) that "the man who shall betray a fellow-creature to bondage — who shall obey this law to the peril of his soul and the loss of his manhood, were he brother, son, or father — shall never pollute my hand with grasp of hideous friendship, or cast his swarthy shadow across my threshold ;" *I would not say that* ; nor would I say, as others have said, that no one ought to shake hands with such wretched slave-hunters as have of late been prowling about the streets of Boston ;

" Men whose ignoble blood
Has crept through scoundrels ever since the flood ;"

but I would extend this hand of mine to *any human being* whom a merciful God sees fit to spare, and, if necessary, *throw my arms around his neck*, and entreat him to forsake the error of his ways, to desist from his hellish work, to cease to do evil and learn to do well. I would "heap coals of fire upon his head," and, if possible, *burn him up with love*. After all,

" The most noble way to kill a foe
Is NOT to kill him : you with *kindness*
May so *change* him, that he shall cease to be so ;
And then *he's slain !*"

But, if a fugitive comes this way, I *charge* you, one and all, as you wish to secure present peace of mind, the approbation of conscience and of God, happiness in a dying hour, and acquittal at the day of judgment, *HIDE THE OUTCAST, or help him along in his journey to a safer place*, even though you may risk personal security, property, and life. Shed no blood ; wield no weapons but those of truth and love ; use no arms but those which God hath given you ! Yet ever remember, that

“whosoever will save his life, shall lose it; and whosoever will lose his life for Christ’s sake shall find it.” O would it not be a glorious privilege to “lay down our lives for the brethren?” to *die*, if *need* be, with the crown of martyrdom on our heads? It would be a matter of everlasting rejoicing, that we had been sacrificed on the altar of humanity, while endeavoring to save God’s perishing poor.

But alas! how dreadful to be summoned before the bar of final accounts, and hear the Judge say, “Depart from me ye cursed; for I was a hungered, and ye gave me no meat; thirsty, and ye gave me no drink; *a stranger, and ye took me not in*: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not; for verily I say unto you, *inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me.*” It will be of no avail then to say, Lord! Lord! gladly would we have done so, but the *laws* on that little spot of earth where we resided, even THE LAWS OF THE UNITED STATES OF NORTH AMERICA, POSITIVELY FORBAD IT! Such a plea would only be offering an insult to the King of kings, and Lord of lords, who has established in this universe of his, certain fixed and unalterable laws, more obligatory than all the codes and regulations of men, and who expects us to obey human laws only when they are conformable to the Divine.

Methinks this new law of man’s devising, which seeks to *convert wrong into right*, and obliterate the best instincts of our moral nature, will prove to be the greatest, mightiest, most eloquent *anti-slavery preacher*, that ever passed through these States; will make a host of *true-hearted abolitionists*—not ultraists or come-outers; not mere third party or free soil abolitionists—but CHRISTIAN ABOLITIONISTS, according to the truest signification of that term. Why! if we are not now WAKED UP, and our eyes opened, to the enormities of slavery, then are we as insensible as the dead ones sleeping under ground in yonder grave-yard, and as blind as was Sampson in the hands of the Philistines!

Dear hearers, please listen to me a very few moments longer, while I enquire if there be no occasion for alarm in view of the constant encroachment of the slave-power, and the dire workings of the slave-system. Have not the dwellers upon the very soil "where rolled the storm of freedom's war," been gradually sinking into a suicidal lethargy, tending to political and moral death? Have not the wire-drawn theories, and the fine-spun arguments of the opponents of human equality and universal brotherhood, been lulling us into a false and fatal security, from which, peradventure, only the flaming thunderbolts of Jehovah's wrath can effectually arouse us?

Let the indifference and apathy which have so long prevailed at the North; let the oft-repeated phrase, "We have nothing to do with slavery," reminding one of Cain's enquiry, "Am I my brother's keeper?" let the destruction of printing presses devoted to the dissemination of liberty principles; let the convulsive throes agitating this Union, as it were, with the gigantic upheaving of an earthquake; let the wild uproar of numerous mobocratic demonstrations; let the long speeches which many have made on the sacred rights of man while crucifying liberty itself in the persons of our colored brethren; let the heartless, faithless preaching of some who occupy the pulpits of the nation, with the price of sacrificed innocence in their hands, "sanctifying the fetters of the slave by hanging them on the cross of that Redeemer," who says, "Call no man master" —

"Torturing the hallowed pages of the Bible
To sanction crime, and robbery, and blood!
And in oppression's hateful service libel
Both man and God;"

let the imprisonment of Northern freemen in Southern jails, guilty of nothing but the praiseworthy act of aiding the helpless fugitive; let the dying groans of the murdered Lovejoy and the martyred Torrey; let the inglorious, dishonorable Mexican war, growing out of

the evil of slavery and a desire for its extension and perpetuation ; let that *blackest* of all "BLACK LAWS," enacted at the last session of Congress, and which has given rise to my Sermon for to-day ;— let all of these things bring in their united verdict !

It would be easy to protract my remarks, and preach all day and all night on so fruitful a theme, but I will relieve your patience, and bring this discourse to a close, by once more quoting the words of the text : "Thou shalt not deliver unto his master the servant that is escaped from his master unto thee : he shall dwell with thee, even among you, in that place which he shall choose, in one of thy gates which it liketh him best : thou shalt not oppress him."

The following appropriate Hymn, selected by the choir, was sung after the delivery of the foregoing Sermon.

"Oppression shall not always reign ;
 There comes a brighter day,
 When freedom, burst from every chain,
 Shall have triumphant way.
 Then right shall over might prevail,
 And truth, like hero armed in mail,
 The hosts of tyrant wrong assail,
 And hold eternal sway.

What voice shall bid the progress stay
 Of truth's victorious car ?
 What arm arrest the growing day,
 Or quench the solar star ?
 What reckless soul, tho' stout and strong,
 Shall dare bring back the ancient wrong,
 Oppression's guilty night prolong,
 And freedom's morning bar ?

The hour of triumph comes apace,
 The fated, promised hour,
 When earth upon a ransomed race
 Her bounteous gifts shall shower.
 Ring, Liberty, thy glorious bell !
 Bid high thy sacred banner swell,
 Let trump on trump the triumph tell,
 Of heaven's redeeming power !"